

of the objects now in Chinese and Occidental collections are of at least as early origin as the Chou. These include weapons, the trimmings of chariots, and ceremonial utensils. The vigorous, massive, dignified, and often graceful and well-proportioned lines of many of the vessels are indicative of skill and taste of no mean order. Shang bronzes especially give evidence of superb workmanship. Under the Han new designs entered, both in form and decoration, and again many of the surviving examples display artistic merit of a high level. In bronzes, as in so many other phases of Chinese art, Buddhism was the vehicle for new motifs which were of foreign origin or showed alien influence. Buddhist images, large and small, were cast in bronze, and the metal was used in numerous objects connected with Buddhist worship. Bells were cast, not only after the advent of Buddhism and for Buddhist uses, but centuries earlier. The Sung workers in bronze rejoiced in copying archaic designs, but also created forms of their own. Under the Ming and the Ch'ing, as in so many other phases of art, the bronzes were often characterized by elaborate decoration.

^Esthetically some of them, even though huge, are vastly inferior to the best products of earlier dynasties. There was, too, much imitation of antique forms. The bronzes which were being made when contacts with the West first became important were, then, usually much below the level of those of many of the preceding centuries.

Bronze is not the only metal in which Chinese artistic feeling has expressed itself. Silver has been widely used, not only for jewelry but for other objects. Gold has been employed—although not so lavishly as in some other lands—

perhaps because it
has been relatively scarce. Pewter has been much
utilized, and
even iron objects have sometimes shown aesthetic
taste.

LACQUER

Lacquer was early seen in China. Lacquered
objects made in
the present Szechwan during the Han have been
found in Korea.
Because of its perishability, lacquer has not stood
the ravages of
time as well as has bronze or jade, but specimens
probably of
T'ang origin are preserved in Japan and we have
descriptions of
it as it was handled under the Sung and know that
by then much
care and artistic skill were being devoted to it. We
know, too, that